

2020 Echols County Comprehensive Plan



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I. Chapter 110-12-1. Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning

1. Introduction

The 2020 Echols County Comprehensive Plan was prepared by following the Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning.

As required by the Local Comprehensive Planning Standards, the 2020 Echols County Comprehensive Plan consists of the following elements:

- Community Goals and Vision Statement
- Needs and Opportunities
- Community Work Program
- Broadband Services Element
- Economic Development Element
(As a community included in the Georgia Job Tax Credit Tier 1 category), A separate summarized economic development element is included in this Comprehensive Plan. By reference, it adopts the current regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Also, any economic development goals, policies, needs, opportunities, and objectives about Echols County has been integrated directly into their parallel components in this Comprehensive Plan.

History of Echols County



Echols County is located in southern Georgia on the Georgia/Florida line. The county seat is located in Statenville, which is an unincorporated municipality. Echols County currently has no incorporated municipalities. Echols County has become notable in recent years for its agriculture. In March 2005, the County was designated as the “Carrot Capitol of the South” by State Senator, Ellis Black.

Echols County was created from Clinch and Lowndes counties on Dec. 13, 1858 by an act of the General Assembly. Georgia's 132nd county was named for Brig. Gen. Robert Echols (1798-1847), a United States officer. He served in the United States Army during the Mexican War as Colonel and commander of the 13th United States Regular Infantry, and was killed in action during the Battle of National Bridge. Before the war he had served in the Georgia State House of Representatives from 1824 to 1829 and in the Georgia State Senate from 1830 to 1844. Originally buried on the field in Mexico, his remains were returned to his native Georgia.

The 1858 act creating Echols County named Harris Tomlinson, Guilford Register, and William B. Cruise as commissioners with authority to select the site and purchase land for location of the county. The legislation further provided that voters of the county assemble at the town of Troublesome on the first Monday in April 1859 and elect county officials. If, by the time of the election, the commissioners had not selected a county seat, the newly elected justices of the inferior court would be empowered to select the county seat. In 1859, neither the commissioners or the inferior court designated Statenville as county seat. The settlement had been named for the community's first storeowner, Capt. James Staten. The General Assembly incorporated Statenville by an act of Dec. 13, 1859. Unfortunately, the act incorrectly identified the new town as "Statesville" rather than "Statenville". Echols County's original courthouse was destroyed by fire in 1897, destroying all records.

In 1958, the General Assembly approved a local act redrawing the boundaries of Statenville. According to the legislation, the town's new boundaries consisted of the Echols County courthouse square — meaning that the city had no official population. In 1965, the legislature approved a local act giving Statenville a new city charter (and one that spelled its' name correctly). The legislation required approval in a referendum, but Statenville voters turned down the new charter.

By the early 1990s, Statenville was one of over 100 official towns that provided few if any services to the citizens of Mayday, Fruitland, Howell, Haylow, Needmore, Potter, and Tarver. Some of these towns had long been inactive— but legally they retained the status of an incorporated municipality. In an effort to deal with this problem, the General Assembly enacted legislation mandating that any incorporated city in Georgia must provide its citizens with at least three municipal services or lose its charter. Though given a grace period to comply, Statenville and those towns lost their municipal charters on July 1, 1995. At that point, they became an unincorporated community under the jurisdiction of the county government. Echols County became a Consolidated Government on February 8, 2008. And today, Echols County is one of only three Georgia counties with an unincorporated community serving as the county seat



According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county has a total area of 421 square miles of which 415 square miles is land and 5.8 square miles is water. The county contains a notable swamp, Whitehead Bay.

The western half of Echols County is located in the Alapaha River sub-basin of the Suwannee River basin. The eastern half of the county, from just east of Statenville to just west of Fargo, is located in the Upper Suwannee River sub-basin of the same Suwannee River basin.

2. Community Involvement

All of the required elements have been developed with extensive opportunity for involvement and input from stakeholders throughout the county and cities. The following steps were taken to ensure that this plan reflected the full range of needs and opportunities from the many stakeholders and residents in the county:

- a) Stakeholders were identified. These included riverkeepers, elected officials, County Staff, and SGRC Staff; local businesses and industries; and the general public.
- b) Participation techniques were identified. Methods used included a kick-off public information meeting, printed public information in local newspapers, and information on the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's website and local government websites. A steering committee was formed to oversee and participate in planned development, including representatives from the stakeholders mentioned above.
- c) A participation program was conducted. Identified stakeholders were invited and attended, yielding specific input in plan content. The steering committee reviewed the plan to provide information and feedback.

1st Public Hearing – “Kick-Off”

The public hearing kicking off the comprehensive planning process was held on August 1, 2019, at the Echols County Commissioners Meeting Room at 110 General DeLoach Rd, Statenville, Georgia. This meeting made any potential stakeholders and residents aware that the comprehensive plan update and review were now underway, to explain the purpose of the update, and encouraged residents and other stakeholders to actively participate in the plan update.

Identification of Stakeholders and Steering Committee

A comprehensive list of potential stakeholders was put together with input from the Chamber of Commerce, Development Authority, elected officials, and residents. A complete list of all the stakeholders is included in this plan on page 2, Acknowledgements.

Identification of Participation Techniques

The following participation techniques were utilized during the update process:

Public Hearings

Workshops

Extensive e-mail correspondence with stakeholders

Special Webpage on SGRC website as well as Echols County website

Conduct Participation Program

A foundational principle utilized by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission in all of its planning projects is public and stakeholder participation from, and coordination with, multiple and diverse interest groups. Due to the relatively small population of the County, the entire stakeholder group was utilized as the steering committee, ensuring the broadest buy-in and diversity of input into the comprehensive plan update. Outreach to the public, local governments, and other stakeholders and interested parties was accomplished by e-mail correspondence, direct communication, Facebook postings, the project website, and updates provided at workshops and other group meetings. Opportunity for public comment was offered at public hearings and city and county commission meetings.

In addition to the two required public hearings, SGRC held a series of two workshops to discuss several elements of the plan. The first workshop was used to review the existing goals, needs, and opportunities; in the form of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, participants updated the list of goals, needs, and opportunities to meet current needs. Copies of the sign-in sheets are provided in the appendix, along with public hearing notices.

The Report of Accomplishments was developed in the second workshop, along with the draft of the updated Community Work Program. The Community Work Program was designed by the participants to include specific action items and projects that would be feasible for the County to implement should funding be available.

First Workshop: SWOT Analysis

The first workshop, held on September 12, 2019, was used to review the existing goals, needs, and opportunities; in the form of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, participants updated the list of goals, issues, and opportunities to meet current needs.

Strengths:



(Photo by "Forgotten Georgia")

- ❖ Boat Landing
- ❖ Boating, fishing, and kayaking on the Alapaha River
- ❖ Flatwoods for game hunting
- ❖ Historical properties
- ❖ Assistance from Coastal Plains providing senior citizens with housing rehabilitation
- ❖ Abundance of land available for development
- ❖ Excellent school system
- ❖ Construction of local State Forestry Office

Weaknesses:

- ❖ Lack of any local industries
- ❖ Lack of retail stores, banks, and grocery store
- ❖ Other counties producing run-off in the rivers
- ❖ A new housing development is needed
- ❖ Transportation to work takes too long
- ❖ Dirt roads need to be paved





(Photo WWALS Watershed Coalition)

Opportunities:

- ❖ Nature trails
- ❖ Fishing, boating, and kayaking can be used as a tourism tool
- ❖ Install signs for Alapaha River Water Trail at landings to attract more use
- ❖ Downtown Revitalization
- ❖ Heritage Tourism

Threats:

- ❖ Poverty rate
- ❖ Lack of industry
- ❖ Loss of younger homeowners
- ❖ Limited broadband coverage
- ❖ Local landowners do not want to sell portions of large parcels of land
- ❖ Current courthouse and sheriff's office needs to be relocated into a new building



Photos of SWOT Analysis Workshop



Second Workshop: Policies & Work Program Report of Accomplishments

The Policies and Report of Accomplishments were developed in the second workshop, held on November 8, 2019, along with the draft of the updated Community Work Program. The Community Work Program was designed by the participants to include specific action items and projects, feasible for the County and the individual communities to implement should funding become available.



2nd Public Hearing - Transmittal of Document

A final public hearing was held on June 4, 2020 to present the final version of the plan to the community, receive any additional public input, and approve the transmittal of the draft plan to DCA. The plan was transmitted to DCA directly after the public hearing.

Adoption of Echols County Comprehensive Plan

The Echols County 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update was adopted on July 9th, 2020. The resolution adopting the plan is included in the Appendix.

3. Consideration of Regional Water Plan and Environmental Planning Criteria

During the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan, the local governments must review both the Regional Water Plan covering its area and the GDR Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria. This review is laid out in Chapter 391-3-16, to determine whether any local implementation practices or development regulations need to be adapted to be consistent with both.

Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan

Echols County is within the area of the Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan, which was adopted in September 2017. Available 2016 Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) data have been reviewed, and any updates to the 2017 Suwannee Satilla Regional Water Plan have been addressed.



Source: CDM Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan

The Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan has identified 13 goals, listed below, to implement its vision of managing water resources in a sustainable manner under Georgia’s regulated riparian and reasonable use laws to support the state’s and region’s economy, protect public health and natural resources, and enhance the quality of life for all citizens. These goals will preserve the private property rights of Georgia’s landowners and in consideration of the need to improve resource augmentation and efficiency opportunities.

Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan Goals:

1. Manage and develop water resources to sustainably and reliably meet domestic, commercial, and industrial water needs, including all agricultural sectors (including agroforestry).
2. Manage ground and surface water to encourage sustainable economic and population growth in the region.
3. Manage the Region's and State's water resources in a manner that preserves and protects private property rights.
4. Ensure an adequate water supply of suitable quality to meet current and future human needs while protecting environmental resources.
5. Identify opportunities to optimize existing and future supplies, and to optimize water and wastewater infrastructure.
6. Promote efficient use and management of surface and groundwater resources to allow for sufficient supplies for current and future generations.
7. Protect and manage surface and groundwater recharge areas to ensure sufficient long-term water supplies for the region.
8. Protect, maintain, and, where appropriate and practicable, identify opportunities to enhance water quality, and river base flows.
9. Protect and maintain regional water-dependent recreational opportunities.
10. Identify opportunities to manage stormwater to improve water quality and quantity.
11. Identify and implement cost-effective water management strategies.
12. Seek to provide economically affordable power and water resource services to all citizens in the region.
13. Identify and implement actions to better measure and share water use data and information.

Also, the Regional Water Plan has adopted several Short-Term Water Quantity and Water Quality Management Practices, which the local comprehensive plan should include to manage water resources sustainably through the planning period and beyond. The most significant Needs in the Suwannee-Satilla Region are surface water availability gaps driven by agricultural usage. As such, the majority of water supply management practices are intended to address agricultural surface water use.

Short Term Water Quantity Management Practices (0-10 Years)

1. Utilize surface water and groundwater sources within the available resource capacities
2. Conserve water
3. Collect data and research to confirm the frequency, duration, severity, and drivers of surface water gaps
4. Evaluate and ensure that current and future surface water permit conditions do not contribute to 7Q10 low flow concerns (the period of lowest streamflow during a seven-day interval that is expected to occur once every ten years)
5. Encourage sustainable groundwater use as a preferred supply in regions with surface water 7Q10 low flow concerns and adequate groundwater supply
6. Identify incentives and a process to sustainably replace a portion of existing agricultural surface water use with groundwater use to address 7Q10 low flow concerns
8. Evaluate the potential to use existing storage to address 7Q10 low flow concerns
9. Education to reduce surficial aquifer groundwater use impacts to 7Q10 low flow concerns

Short-Term Water Quality Management Practices (0 – 10 Years):

1. Point Sources:

- Support and fund current permitting and waste load allocation process to improve treatment of wastewater and increase treatment capacity
- Data collection and research to confirm discharge volumes and waste concentrations as well as receiving stream flows and chemistry

2. Non-Point Sources:

- Data collection to confirm the source of pollutants and causes; encourage stormwater ordinances, septic system maintenance, and coordinated planning
- Ensure funding and support for local and state Best Management Practices programs, including urban/suburban, rural, forestry, and agricultural Best Management Practices

3. Non-point Source Existing Impairments:

- Total maximum daily load listed streams: Improve data on the source of pollutant and length of impairment; identify opportunities to leverage funds, and implement non-point source Best Management Practices

Longer-Term (20 – 40 years) water quantity and quality management practices include:

- Improve the infiltration and management of wetlands
- Evaluate incentive-based programs to manage, increase, and restore wastewater and stormwater returns
- Identify potential/feasibility of a multi-purpose reservoir
- Identify the feasibility of regional inter-basin transfer
- Continue wastewater and stormwater master planning

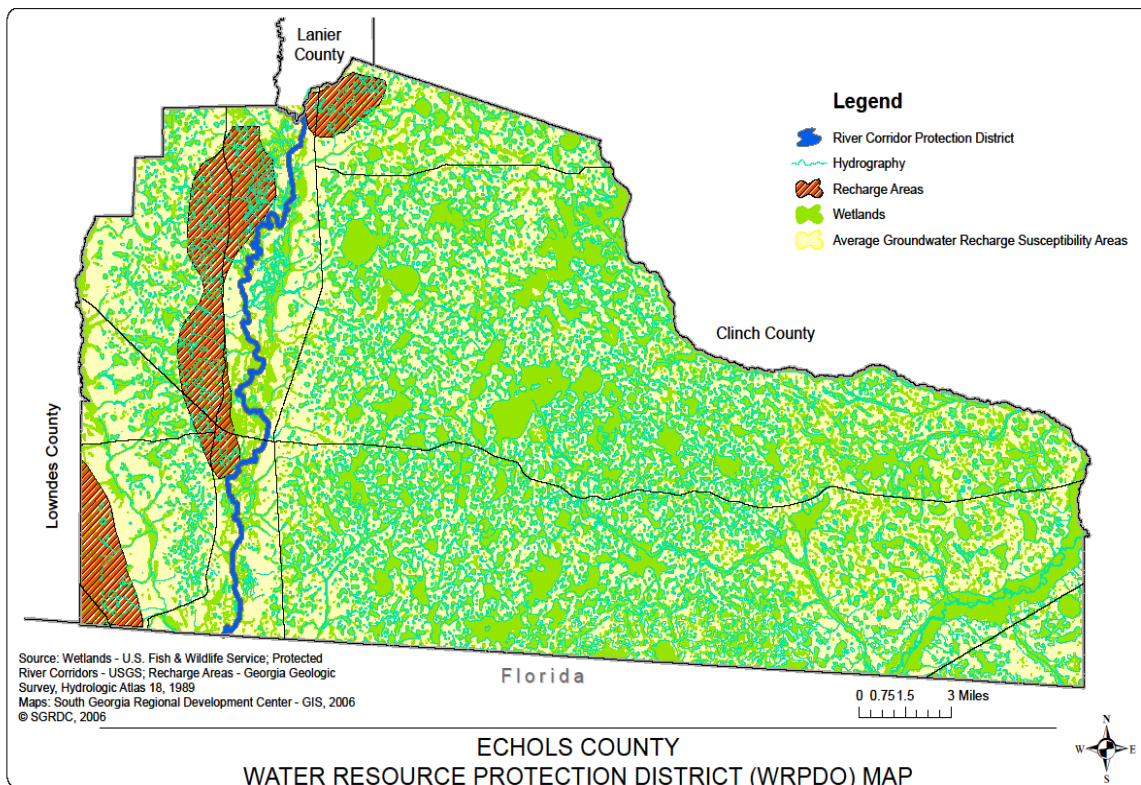
Chapter 391-3-16, Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria

The Environmental Planning Criteria that are part of the Minimum Planning Standards deal specifically with the protection of water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, river corridors, and mountains, the last of which is not applicable in this region. These criteria were developed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as mandated in Part V of the Georgia Planning Act and the Mountains and River Corridor Protection Act.

The criteria require that local governments shall identify existing and future water supply watersheds and adopt a water supply watershed protection plan for their jurisdiction.

Some uses may be grandfathered, such as land uses existing before the adoption of a watershed plan, mining activities permitted by DNR, specific utility placements, special forestry, or agricultural services.

The environmental guidelines also spell out criteria for the delineation of small and abundant water supply watersheds, for the protection of groundwater recharge areas, for the protection of wetlands, and the protection of river corridors. These criteria shall be incorporated into this comprehensive plan and addressed explicitly and in more detail through local ordinances and land development code regulations.



II. Plan Elements

1. Community Goals

Vision Statement

“Creating a livable, lovable community, one step at a time, by encouraging the protection of the County’s natural heritage.”



The purpose of the Community Goals Element is to lay out a road map for Echols County’s future, to generate local buy-in to the plan, and to ensure that the plan is implemented. Communities are encouraged to amend and update the goals as necessary.

Goal 1: **Natural Resources.** Establish and maintain the conservation and protection measures for natural areas, where those areas would be endangered by development. These areas include, but are not limited to, floodplains, wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, protected river corridors, forested hardwood areas, and areas where Georgia and Federally Endangered species and habitat exist.

Goal 2: **Cultural Resources.** Protect, preserve, and promote the historic and cultural resources of Echols County through such measures as regulations, adaptive reuse, and tourism and education programs focused on historic preservation.

Goal 3: **Economic Development.** Improve the Echols County economy by developing and enhancing new and existing strengths that will draw new business, expand existing businesses, diversify the local economy, and help Echols County compete in the regional economy.

Goal 4: **Housing.** Ensure that all residents within Greater Echols County have access to quality and affordable housing.

Goal 5: **Transportation.** Provide a safe and efficient transportation system that addresses the future needs of Echols County for the movement of people while taking into consideration the social, economic, energy, and environmental effects of that transportation system.

Goal 6: **Land Use.** Protect and enhance the value of existing development areas; promote development and redevelopment within urbanized areas; create and improve stable neighborhoods, and maintain accessible open space for future land use opportunities.

Goal 7: **Community Facilities and Services.** Develop and maintain public services and facilities to accommodate existing development and to encourage future sustainable growth in areas where community facilities and services are provided at adequate capacities.

Goal 8: **Broadband.** To encourage coordination of planning efforts with other local service providers and authorities, neighboring communities, and state and regional planning agencies.

2. Needs and Opportunities

The Needs and Opportunities listed in this section were developed through discussions with stakeholders and residents, from the experiences of stakeholders and residents, through analysis of statistical data and information, and thorough review and revision as applicable to the Needs and Opportunities identified in the Echols County current. Each of the following Needs and opportunities is addressed by corresponding policies in the “Community Policies” section.

Development Patterns

Natural Resources

Needs

- ❖ Continue to enforce regulations for taxes on timber, which results in lost revenue for the County because there is no way to confirm the removal of timber. The cost-profit ratio for enforcement doesn’t make it feasible to enforce taxation.
- ❖ Protection of the wetlands is a concern because natural filters are removed, which endangers the water quality in Echols County. No enforcement ability impacts groundwater recharge areas.
- ❖ No enforcement of Part V Environmental Ordinances. (Mandated by DCA to ensure local governments have adopted regulations consistent with the Rules for Environmental Criteria, River Corridors Act)

Opportunities

- ❖ The Pine Tree industry thrives in Echols County and creates employment and tax value by replenishing the trees.
- ❖ The Alapaha River flows north to south on the west side of the County and has one boat ramp. Continue to promote the Alapaha River and its uses. This information needs to be placed in the State Tourism Brochure as one of the cleanest rivers to attract visitors.
- ❖ The Suwannee River, Grand Bay Creek, Alapahoochee River, and Toms Creek could be utilized a lot for recreational and tourist uses.
- ❖ There is a large hunting area in the eastern portion of the County and private hunting camps like Wolf Bay, Cowhouse, and May Day, which attracts a lot of visitors from Florida.

Cultural Resources

Needs

- ❖ A new building of a courthouse and sheriff’s office is needed. This is a public health need as the current building bathrooms lack capacity, which causes malfunctioning when serving large crowds. The existing courthouse and sheriff’s office have exceeded renovations.

- ❖ There are not enough properties listed and recognized as historical, so many are lost, and not preserved.

Opportunities

- ❖ The Historical Society is active and can provide valuable resources, through knowledge and information about buildings and land.
- ❖ Identify historic unique places and events to encourage visitors and tourism.

Economic Development

Needs

- ❖ There are not enough restaurants in the County, which causes loss of income and sales tax because residents and visitors leave the community to eat.
- ❖ There is a lack of retail in the county; as a result, residents drive to Valdosta for shopping. We need to attract more businesses to the area.
- ❖ Commercial sales taxes are lost to Lowndes County due to lack of businesses in Echols County.
- ❖ Need to install signs for the Alapaha Water Trail.

Opportunities

- ❖ The tree stock throughout the County is worth well over 100 million dollars, and the Pine Tree industry is thriving; this can be utilized to create more business opportunities for the County such as fuel pellet industry and potential sawmills.
- ❖ The school system is a significant employer for the County. The school is also a State recognized school for the highest APR could be used as an attraction for new residents and businesses
- ❖ The County is a prime location for a centralized processing center (Hub) for recycling that could service the counties surrounding Echols.
- ❖ Continue to update the County website to raise awareness and promote the county.
- ❖ Promote the boat landing at the Alapaha River.
- ❖ There are nature trails, fishing, and kayaking that can be developed for tourism.
- ❖ There are a lot of Flatwoods for hunting.

Housing

Needs

- ❖ The quality of housing stock has been degraded due to a few illegal /non-permitted mobile homes parks that have created blighted areas.
- ❖ There is no public assisted housing in the County, and there is a lack of affordable stick-built housing such as apartments or condos for the elderly and the low-to-moderate income.
- ❖ Building Codes need to be adhered to as a safety Need – houses are not maintained.
- ❖ Need a local bank so more people can be attracted to build their homes in the community.

Opportunities

- ❖ Echols County has become a “bedroom community” for Lowndes County, which will contribute to the local tax base.
- ❖ Develop an incentive program to keep properties maintained and sound.

Transportation

Needs

- ❖ There are too many dirt roads, and non-porous paving is too costly for the County.

Opportunities

- ❖ Work closely with Georgia DOT in developing plans for paving dirt roads in high-density areas. Seek grants, such as CDBG and LMIG, for funding. Also, consider SPLOST and TSPLOST.
- ❖ Seek funding for sidewalks, walking paths, and bicycle paths, such as CDBG Grant, SPLOST, and TSPLOST.

Needs

- ❖ Lack of jobs within the community causes too much time commuting.

Opportunities

- ❖ Work with the Chamber of Commerce to find ways to attract more local businesses.

Land Use

Needs

- ❖ There is no zoning but Echols County does have a Subdivision Ordinance, created on 5/23/2006.
- ❖ The lack of multi-family apartments and condos has resulted in the creation of dilapidated manufactured/ mobile home parks, due to lack of code.
- ❖ Plenty of land for development, but farmers do not want to sell their property.

Opportunities

- ❖ Adopting a zoning ordinance.
- ❖ Continue to enforce codes for dilapidated buildings.
- ❖ Promote the sale of unused farmlands.

Needs

- ❖ There is a need for more recreational opportunities for the youth.
- ❖ The volunteer fire services need funding for updated equipment, and volunteers are needed.
- ❖ There is a need for a public sewer system in the community.

Opportunities

- ❖ The public boat ramp located on the Alapaha River is valuable and could be better used as an asset to the community. The new school site makes the previous site available for other public uses.
- ❖ Research ways to get people to volunteer and be trained as firefighters.
- ❖ The school system attracts some newcomers to the area.
- ❖ There is a new forestry office being built.

Community Facilities

Needs

- ❖ The water supply is too low and the water is pumped through old infrastructure (terracotta pipes), which generates the need for a new water system.
- ❖ There is a need for more recreational opportunities for the youth.
- ❖ There are no sewer lines.

Opportunities

- ❖ The public boat ramp located on the Alapaha River is valuable and could be used better as an asset to the community.

- ❖ Create a public/private partnership between the Water Authority and the County Commission to address water issues and research the feasibility of adding a sewer system.

Broadband Services

Needs

- ❖ More affordable, accessible, consistent, and higher-speed broadband access is needed throughout all of Echols County.

Opportunities

- ❖ Better broadband services will improve the future for all citizens and businesses.
- ❖ Encourage partnership of providers to allow better broadband services.
- ❖ Public/Private Partnerships could be developed to provide comprehensive broadband coverage that is consistent, reliable, and equitable.
- ❖ Create a public/private partnership between the Water Authority and the County Commission to address water issues and research the feasibility of adding a sewer system.

3. Analysis of Data and Information

Echols County

Population Statistics

Reviewing the population data (US Census 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates), it shows that the 2018 population of Echols County is 3,994. The population has decreased by -0.7 percent since 2010 but was estimated to increase for 2019 by 0.75 percent, indicating a relatively stable population. There are 1,586 households and 1,502 families. 73.8 percent of the population is White, and 3.6 percent are Black. American Indian and Alaska Native are 2.1 percent of the population, and other races make up 16.6 percent of the population. 4.0 percent make up two or more races. Hispanic/Latino origin is 24.6 percent of the total population.

In Echols County, 4.7 percent are under the age of five years old, 7.0 percent are age five to nine years, 5.4 percent is 10-14 years of age, 15 – 19 years of age is 8.4 percent, 20 to 24 years of age is 3.7 percent, 25 to 34 years of age is 11.3 percent, 35-44 years of age is 16.8 percent, 45-54 years of age is 15.6 percent, 55– 59 years of age is 5.2 percent, 60 –74 years of age is 9.0 percent, 75 – 84 years of age is 4.7 percent, and 85 years and over is 2.5 percent.

Based on a 5-year study, the median age is 40.9. In Georgia, the median age is 40.9, and in the United States, the median age is 37.8. The median age for females in Echols County is 37.0, Georgia is 37.6, and in the US, the median age for females is 38.9. For males in Echols County, the median age is 43.5, Georgia is 35, and 36.5 in the United States. Males 18 years and older is 53.0 percent, and females 18 years and older living in Echols County 47.0 percent. Males 65 and over are 48.9 percent, and females 65 years and over are 51.1 percent.

Workforce

Approximately 1,667 people living in Echols County are in the workforce. 1,049 workers are male, and 618 are female. These totals only consider the population of workers 16 years of age and older, based on a 5-year study. 94/5 percent use a car, truck, or van to commute to work, and 86.7 percent drove alone. 7.9 percent of workers carpool. 0.5 percent use public transportation, and 1.0 percent walk to work. 4.0 percent of people work from home, and 67.8 percent work outside of Echols County.

Travel time of less than 10 minutes is 13.1 percent of the workforce, 10-14 minutes for 10.9 percent, 15 – 19 minutes for 5.7 percent, 20-24 minutes for 17.6 percent, 25-29 minutes for 11.1 percent, 30-34 minutes for 18.9 percent, 35-44 minutes for 9.8 percent, 45-59 minutes for 9.7 percent, and 60 or more minutes for 3.3 percent of the workforce. The mean travel time is 25 minutes.

Housing Statistics

Reviewing the household data (US Census Quick Facts) shows that the total number of housing units is 1,838 in Echols County. Of that, 62.1 percent of housing units are owner-occupied, which is lower than the national average of 63.9%, and 37.9 percent are rentals. The median home value is \$57,000, which is 0.262 times smaller than the national average of \$127,600. The median monthly owner's cost, with a mortgage, is \$916, median monthly owner's expense, without a mortgage, is \$311. The median gross rent is \$670. In Echols County, the largest share of households pay taxes in the <\$800 range.

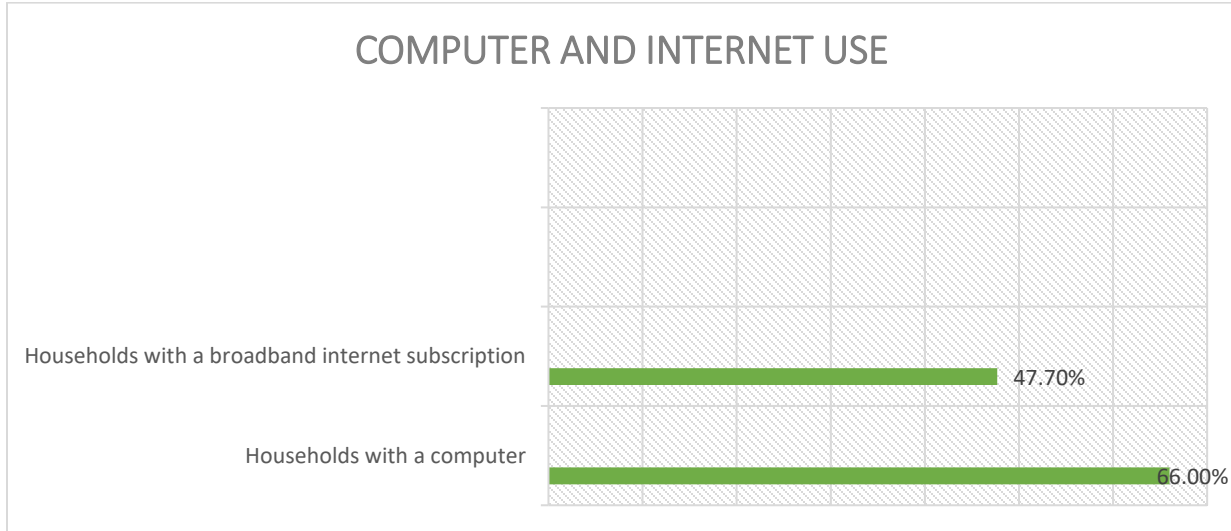
The median household income in Echols County is \$34,315, and the per capita income is \$20,589. Per capita income in the past 12 months is \$20,589. Persons per household in Echols County is second in Georgia out of 159 other counties with 2.83 persons per household.

Persons in poverty in Echols County are 26.5 percent. Echols County is 2nd in Georgia out of 159 other counties in Income below the poverty level. In the United States, there are 11.8% living in poverty. Only 58.4% of the population of age 16 years or older are in the labor force, and of that, 47.7% are female, and 52.3% are male.

Education

Reviewing the education data (US Census 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates) of those 25 years of age, 69.3 percent of people living in Echols County have a High School diploma or higher. 6.95 percent have a Bachelor's degree or higher.

4. Broadband Element



Broadband service in Echols County is provided through DSL, fixed wireless, and satellite. There are seven internet providers, with 3 offering residential services. No one in Echols County has access to a fiber-optic broadband connection. Statenville is the 442nd most connected city in Georgia, behind Valdosta, Naylor, and Lake Park. 100% of residents are still limited in wired broadband choices. 66.0% of households have a computer, and 47.7% of households have broadband internet. Echols County has an average download speed of 16 Mbps and a maximum download speed of 100 Mbps.

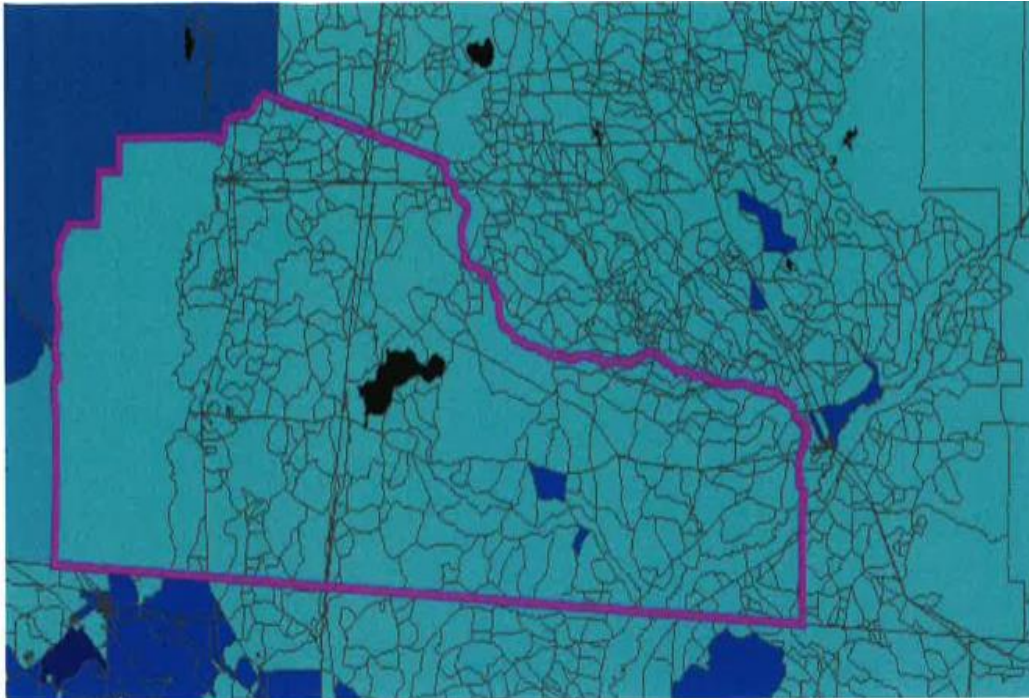
The communities are mainly served by two wired providers: AT&T and Viasat. AT & T provides DSL and Fixed internet services, while Viasat provides satellite services. One additional provider is reporting coverage in limited areas. 100% of Statenville is currently cut off from choice so far as broadband internet services. Approximately 1,000 people in Echols don't have access to any wired internet.

Broadband services are via phone lines with DSL internet providers and usually are offered with phone service. AT&T internet service is close to 100% of the coverage footprint and commonly available broadband service provider in the Statenville area.

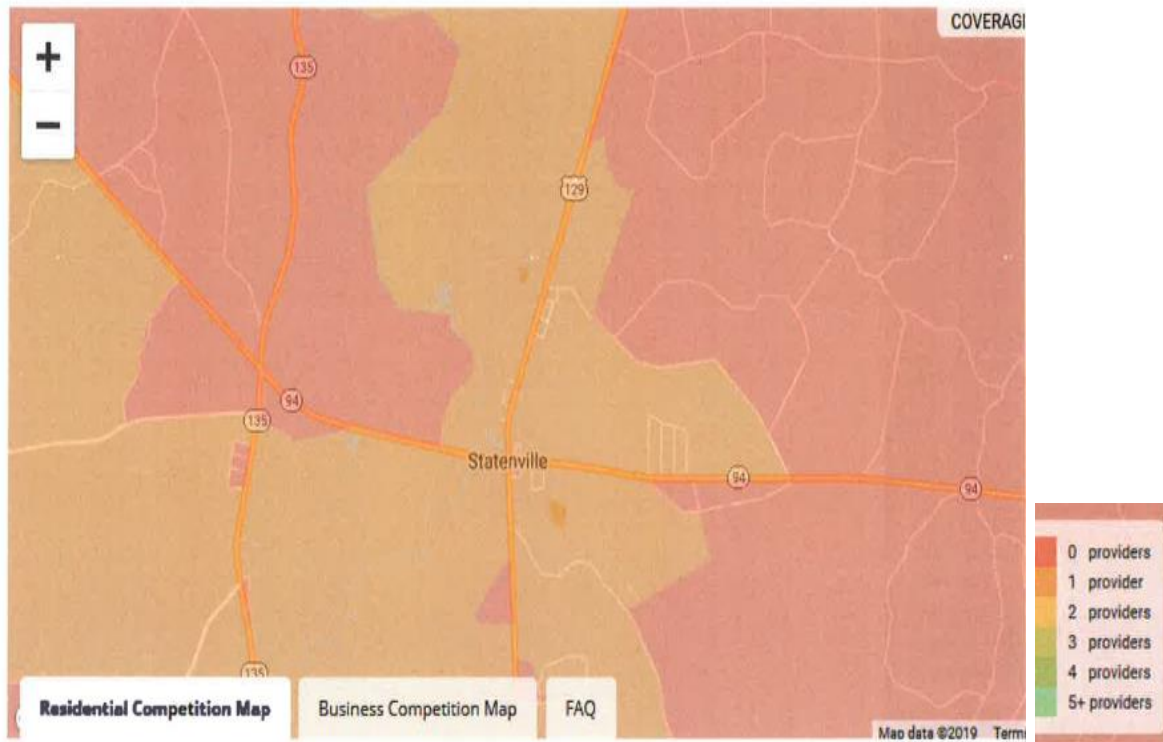
The Southern Georgia Regional Commission's 2014 *Digital Economy Plan* called for expanded broadband access in the region along with strategies for the region to remain competitive and maintain a qualified workforce in an increasingly digitized economy.

The infrastructure through which broadband is provided, and the condition of that infrastructure, is widely varied throughout the region. DSL service is provided through telephone lines. Cable broadband is delivered through cable lines that often share poles with telephone and electric wires. As such, cable and DSL broadband infrastructure is vulnerable to damage from storms. Fiber-optic lines are typically buried.

BROADBAND AREA MAP OF ECHOLS COUNTY



INTERNET PROVIDER COMPETITION MAP FOR STATENVILLE (RESIDENTIAL)



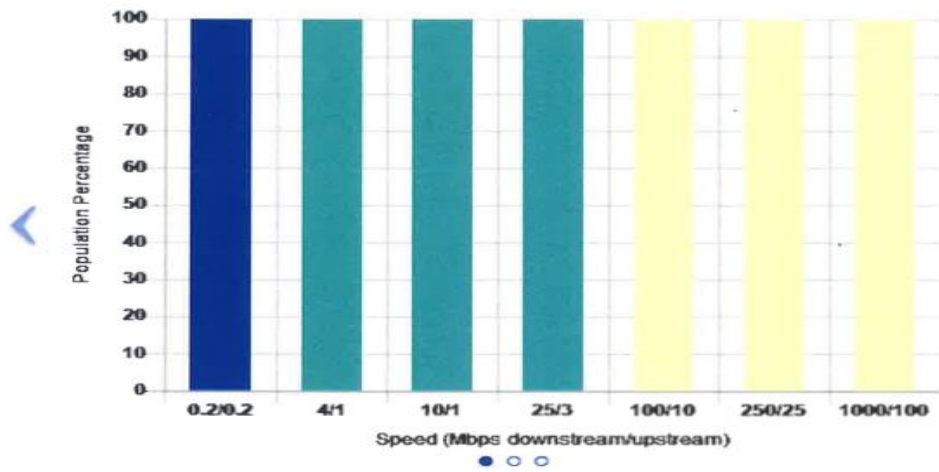
Echols County, GA

Number of Fixed Residential Broadband Providers



Broadband

Technology Satellite
Speed ≥ 25/3 Mbps
Date Dec. 2017 (latest public release)



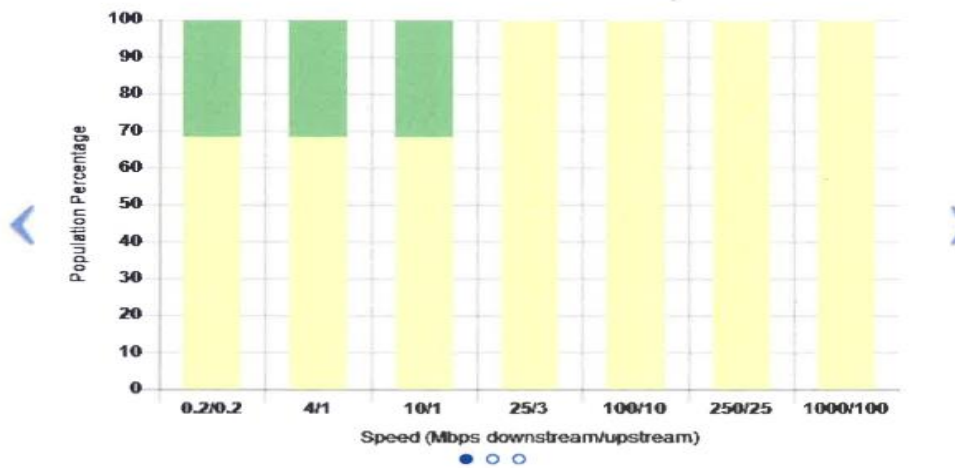
Echols County, GA

Number of Fixed Residential Broadband Providers



Broadband

Technology Fixed Wireless
Speed ≥ 25/3 Mbps
Date Dec. 2017 (latest public release)



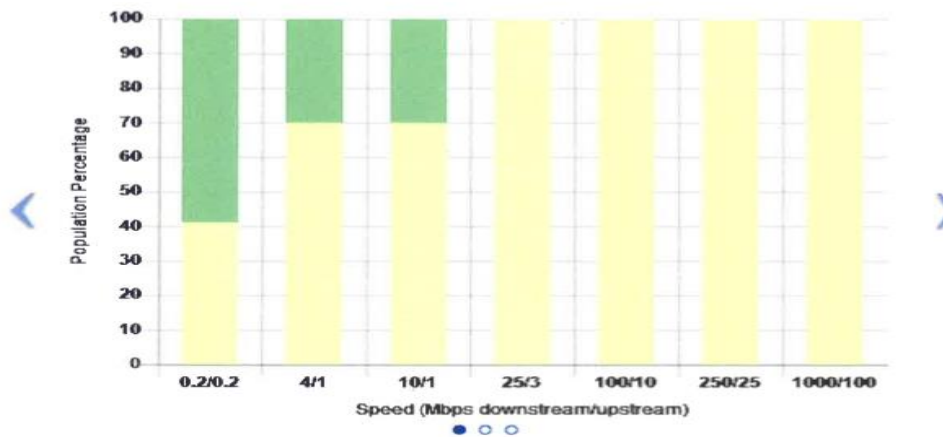
Echols County, GA

Number of Fixed Residential Broadband Providers



Broadband

Technology ADSL
 Speed $\geq 25/3$ Mbps
 Date Dec. 2017 (latest public release)



Internet Providers Coverage in Echols County

PROVIDER	MAX MBPS DOWNLOAD	MAX MBPS UPLOADS	CONNECTION	COVERAGE
HughesNet	25	3	Satellite and Phone	97.87%
Viasat	101	3	Satellite and Phone	96.88%
EarthLink	75	3	Fiber and DSL	45.00%
AT&T	18	1	DSL and Television	11.82%
Cyberonic	11	11	Fiber, Cable, DSL, Copper and Fixed Wireless	11.82%
Windstream	100	8	Fiber, Cable, DSL, Copper and Phone	0.81%

Broadband Action Plan

A vital goal of this Comprehensive Plan is to ensure that needed community facilities, including broadband, are provided effectively, consistent with present demand and future growth (see Section II of this plan, Goal 8). Moreover, this plan lists the following Needs and Opportunities related to broadband in Section 2:

Need

- **More affordable, accessible, consistent, and higher-speed broadband access is needed throughout all of Echols County.**

Opportunities

- Better broadband services will improve the future for all citizens and businesses.
- Encourage partnership of providers to allow better broadband services.
- Public/Private Partnerships could be developed to provide comprehensive broadband coverage that is consistent, reliable, and equitable.

Furthermore, the following community policies in this plan relate to broadband:

Policy 1.1: Better broadband services will improve the future for all citizens and businesses.

Policy 1.2: Technology Infrastructure. Community-wide technology infrastructure should be considered a primary community facility and, as such, should be adequately planned for and implemented.

Policy 1.3: Agriculture Services. Investigate opportunities to improve broadband to meet precision agricultural needs.

Policy 1.4: Public/Private Partnership. Pursue the development of public/private partnerships to provide comprehensive broadband coverage that is consistent, reliable, and equitable.

The above needs, opportunities, and policies have been used to inform an action plan for the promotion of the deployment of broadband services into unserved and underserved areas of Echols County. The specific action items in the action plan are listed below and are cross-listed in the Community Work Program for the county (see Section 7).

Broadband Action Steps

Activity	Estimated Cost	Responsible Party	Funding Source	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25
Develop a public industrial park with infrastructure (roads, water, sanitary sewer broadband, etc.)	\$500,000	Echols County/Statenville Water System	EIP, One Georgia and USDA Grants	x	x	x	x	
Research ways to enhance the communication network for the county, including establishing a Wireless Network Center	Staff	Echols County	General Funds	x	x	x		
Establish broadband coverage for the county (including hot spots) and participate in Regional efforts in cooperation with GTA	\$500,000	Echols County	General Funds, SPLOST, Grants	x	x	x	x	

5. Consideration of DCA Quality Community Objectives

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has crafted a series of objectives dealing with a broad range of issues that concern local governments. The objectives, which are listed below, are only recommendations, but provide local governments with a tool to guide them in the assessment of their needs and opportunities and the development of their implementation activities. If local governments use objectives in their planning efforts, it will also have the potential to result in consistent planning projects and goals. The use of these tools may translate into greater efficiency and a better quality of life for the residents. This section contains an analysis of the consistency of the community's current policies, activities, and development patterns with the Quality Community Objectives, and recommends related best practices as provided by DCA.

Quality Community Objective	Notes on consistency with Comprehensive Plan for Echols County
<p>1. Economic Prosperity Encourage the development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community. Factors to consider when determining suitability include job skills required, long-term sustainability, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.</p>	<p>Community activities, including economic development efforts, are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Business incubator ❖ Corridor study ❖ Downtown program
<p>2. Resource Management Promote the efficient use of natural resources and identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the community. Achieve this by promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy generation, encouraging green building construction and renovation, utilizing appropriate waste management techniques, fostering water conservation and reuse, or setting environmentally sensitive areas aside as green space or conservation reserves.</p>	<p>Land use element and goals and policies related to natural resources are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Conservation easements ❖ Pervious paving ❖ Riparian buffers ❖ Water resource protection
<p>3. Efficient Land Use Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community. Achieve this by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the traditional core of the community, designing new development to minimize the amount of land consumed, carefully planning the expansion of public infrastructure, or maintaining open space in agricultural, forestry, or conservation uses.</p>	<p>The land use elements and infrastructure-related goals and policies of this plan are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Adaptive reuse ❖ Brownfield redevelopment ❖ Infill development program ❖ Preserve agriculture land use ❖ Urban redevelopment plan

Quality Community Objective	Notes on consistency with Comprehensive Plan for Echols County
<p>4. Local Preparedness Identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve. Requirements might include infrastructure (roads, water, and sewer) to support or direct new growth, ordinances, and regulations to manage growth as desired. Leadership and staff would be capable of responding to opportunities and managing new challenges or undertaking an all-hazards approach to disaster preparedness and response with this objective. The community also has a multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan that is consistent with this objective and capable leadership and staff.</p>	<p>Projects and policies in this plan and local ordinances, are consistent with this objective. The community also has a multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan that is consistent with this objective and capable leadership and staff. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ All-hazards strategy ❖ Comprehensive planning ❖ Professional development-planning staff <p>Subdivision development standards</p>
<p>5. Sense of Place Protect and enhance the community’s unique qualities. The qualities may be achieved by maintaining the downtown as focal point of the community; fostering compact, walkable, mixed-use development; protecting and revitalizing historic areas of the community; encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, or protecting scenic and natural elements that are important to defining the community's character.</p>	<p>Projects and policies in this plan and local ordinances are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Code enforcement ❖ Design Guidelines
<p>6. Regional Cooperation Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs. Achieve this by actively participating in regional organizations identifying joint projects that will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer, or developing collaborative solutions for regional issues such as protection of shared natural resources, development of the transportation network, or creation of a tourism plan.</p>	<p>There is a high level of cooperation and collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Regional roundtable <p>Shared service agreements</p>

Quality Community Objective	Notes on consistency with Comprehensive Plan for Echols County
<p>7. Housing Options Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource-efficient housing in the community. Achieve this by encouraging the development of a variety of housing types, sizes, costs, and densities in each neighborhood; promoting programs to provide housing for residents of all socioeconomic backgrounds, including affordable mortgage finance options; instituting programs to address homelessness Issues in the community; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure the availability of adequate workforce housing in the community.</p>	<p>Projects and policies in this plan and local ordinances are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Georgia Initiative for Community Housing ❖ Housing for the disadvantage ❖ Housing for the elderly Mixed-Income Housing
<p>8. Transportation Options Address the transportation needs, challenges, and opportunities of all community residents. Achieve by fostering alternatives to transportation by automobile, including walking, cycling, and transit, employing traffic calming measures throughout the community, requiring adequate connectivity between adjoining developments, or coordinating transportation and land-use decision-making within the community.</p>	<p>Transportation goals, policies, and projects are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Complete streets ❖ Sidewalk/trail network ❖ Improving street connectivity Safe Routes to School
<p>9. Educational Opportunities Make educational and training opportunities readily available to enable all community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, manage their finances, or pursue life ambitions. Achieve this by expanding and enhancing local educational institutions or programs. Provide access to other institutions in the region. Institute programs to improve local graduation rates, expanding vocational education programs, or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure an adequately trained and skilled workforce.</p>	<p>Goals, policies, and projects in this plan are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Public internet access Transportation to educational facilities

Quality Community Objective	Notes on consistency with Comprehensive Plan for Echols County
<p>10. Community Health Ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability, or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods, and excellent work opportunities. Achieve this by providing services to support the basic needs of disadvantaged residents, including the disabled, instituting programs to improve public safety. Promote programs that foster better health and fitness by providing all residents the opportunity to improve their circumstances in life and to fully participate in the community entirely.</p>	<p>Goals, policies, and projects in this plan are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Transportation to services

6. Community Policies

The following policies, numbered to align with the Community Goals, were developed in conjunction with all stakeholders and are intended to provide qualitative guidance to address the Needs and Opportunities identified in this Plan and to provide a framework for the development of the Community Work Program. The Community Work Program then addresses the Needs and Opportunities through specific projects, for each of which the participants, anticipated cost, and time frame are identified.

Development Patterns

Natural Resource

Goal: 1: Establish and maintain the conservation and protection measures for natural areas, where those areas would be endangered by development. These areas include, but are not limited to, floodplains, wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, protected river corridors, forested hardwood areas, and areas where Georgia and Federally Endangered species and habitat exist.

Needs & Policies

Need: *There is limited enforcement of regulations for taxes on timber, which results in lost revenue for the county because there is no way to check or prove. The cost-profit ratio for enforcement doesn't make it feasible to enforce taxation.*

Policy 1.1: Consider the pursuit of Federal and State grant opportunities with the assistance of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission to fund the hiring of additional staff to monitor the timber industry.

Need: *Protection of the wetlands is a concern because the natural filters are removed, and endangers the water quality in Echols County. No enforcement impacts groundwater recharge areas.*

Need: *No enforcement of Part V Environmental Ordinances.*

Policy 1.2: Consider the creation of land development regulations that will promote Conservation Subdivisions and Best Management Practices for business developments to prevent development from polluting or exhausting the natural replenishment cycles of the water bodies throughout the County.

Need: *Need to promote the use of the Alapaha River.*

Policy 1.3: Encourage more people to use the Alapaha River Water Trail, paddle excursions, and events.

Policy 1.4: Encourage keeping the Alapaha River clean.

Cultural Resources

Goal 2: Protect, preserve, and promote the historic and cultural resources of Echols County through such measures as regulations, adaptive reuse, and tourism and education programs focused on historic preservation.

Needs & Policies

Need: *There are not enough properties listed and recognized as historical, so many are lost and not preserved.*

Policy 2.1 Support creating an inventory of National Register eligible sites with County staff and members of the Historical Society.

Need: *A new courthouse needs to be built that will house the BOCC offices, Commissioner's meeting room, and Sheriff's Office.*

Policy 2.2: Encourage the use of SPLOST and grants, for construction of a new courthouse, commissioners meeting room, and Sheriff's Office.

Economic Development

Goal 3: Improve the Echols County economy by developing and enhancing new and existing strengths that will draw new business, expand existing businesses, diversify the local economy, and help Echols County compete in the regional economy.

Needs & Policies

Need: *There are not enough restaurants in the County, which cause loss of income and sales tax because residents and or visitors leave the County to eat.*

Policy 3.1: Private sector economic investments should be encouraged and fostered through the availability of financial and technical assistance.

Need: *Commercial sales taxes are lost to Lowndes County due to the lack of businesses in Echols County.*

Policy 3.2: Consider the establishment of a small Chamber of Commerce that can attract businesses to Echols County.

Policy 3.3: Encourage coordination between potential developers, the County Commission, and the Southern Georgia Regional Commission to utilize specific programs and financing mechanisms that will create local businesses, and in result expand the County's commercial tax base.

Housing

Goal 4: **Ensure that all residents within Greater Echols County have access to quality and affordable housing.**

Needs & Policies

Need: *The quality of housing stock has been degraded due to a few illegal/non-permitted mobile homes parks that have created blighted areas.*

Policy 4.1: The County is encouraged to adopt and enforce land development regulations that can revitalize blighted areas throughout the County.

Need: *There is no public assisted housing in the County, and there is a lack of affordable stick-built housing such as apartments or condos for the elderly and low-to-moderate income.*

Policy 4.2: Consider utilizing Federal and State programs that offer low-interest loans and tax reduction incentives for the development of affordable housing, including both single and multiple family developments.

Need: *Subdivisions are near capacity, so another subdivision is necessary.*

Policy 4.3: Continue to improve the water services, fire protection, sheriff's department enforcement, and recreational activities, to make Echols County more attractive to residents from outside of the County.

Need: *Building Codes need to be kept up as a safety issue. Houses are not maintained to code.*

Policy 4.4: Encourage compliance with applicable state building codes.

Transportation

Goal 5: Provide a safe and efficient transportation system that addresses the future needs of Echols County for the movement of people while taking into consideration the social, economic, energy, and environmental effects of that transportation system.

Needs & Policies

Need: *The transit system for the elderly needs to be improved for quicker loading and unloading of its passengers.*

Policy 5.1: Continue the use of the transit system for the medically needed and senior citizens. Encourage safe and quick loading and unloading.

Policy 5.2: Participate in a Public Transit System for all citizens. The following three options are available: 1) Single County Public Transit System operated by the county, 2) Single County Public Transit System operated by a third party, or 3) Regional Public Transit System for the SGRC 18 counties. GDOT has approached the SGRC to consider administering and managing the Regional Transit System.

Land Use

Goal 6: Protect and enhance the value of existing development areas; promote development and redevelopment within urbanized areas; create and improve stable neighborhoods, and maintain accessible open space for future land use opportunities.

Needs & Policies

Need: There are no zoning or subdivision regulations or an active Planning Commission.

Policy 6.1: Consider re-establishing a Planning Commission that can coordinate with the Southern Georgia Regional Commission for the creation of Land Development regulations.

Need: The lack of Multi-family land uses have resulted in the creation of dilapidated manufactured/ mobile home parks, because of no enforcement and no places to move.

Policy 6.2: Identify areas throughout the County that can support the development of multi-family land use and consider designating these areas specifically for medium and high-density residential land uses on a future land use map.

Community Facilities and Services

Goal 7: Develop and maintain public services and facilities to accommodate existing development and to encourage future sustainable growth in areas where community facilities and services are provided at adequate capacities.

Needs & Policies

Need: The water supply is too low and is pumped through old infrastructure (terracotta pipes), which increases the need for a new water system.

Policy 7.1: Continue to work with the private water company to improve the water supply and infrastructure.

Need: Echols County has no sewer lines.

Policy 7.3: Consider the establishment of a committee to research the feasibility of providing county-owned sewer services for Statenville.

Need: *There are too many dirt roads, and non-porous paving is too costly for the County.*

Policy 7.4: Encourage the pursuit of road improvement funds that are available through federal and state programs.

Need: *The volunteer fire services need funding for updated equipment.*

Policy 7.5: Research grants to fund the purchase of new equipment.

Need: *Continue to encourage more people to volunteer for fire station on J. Culpepper Rd, which has resulted in crewless stations.*

Policy 7.6: Continue to provide necessary fire protection services through the County.

Policy 7.7: Encourage the County to pursue FEMA Grants with the assistance of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission to improve the services provided by the Volunteer Fire Department.

Need: *The County needs additional resources, such as a passage of the SPLOST, to construct and new courthouse and sheriff's office.*

Policy 7.8: SPLOST and other funding should be pursued. Educate the public about the benefits of SPLOST.

Broadband

Goal 8: **To encourage coordination of planning efforts with other local service providers and authorities, neighboring communities, and state and regional planning agencies.**

Need: *More affordable, accessible, consistent, and higher-speed broadband access is necessary throughout all of Echols County.*

Policy 8.1: **Services.** Better broadband services will improve the future for all citizens and the business community.

Policy 8.2: **Technology Infrastructure.** Community-wide technology infrastructure should be considered a primary community facility and, as such, should be adequately planned for and implemented.

Policy 8.3: **Agriculture Services.** Investigate opportunities to improve broadband to meet precision agricultural needs.

Policy 8.4: **Public/Private Partnership.** Pursue development of public/private partnerships to provide comprehensive broadband coverage that is consistent, reliable, and equitable.

7. Community Work Program

Echols County 5-Year Short-Term Work Program Update Report of Accomplishments

(2016 - 2020)

PROJECTS	REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	COMMENTS
PLANNING							
Re-instate the Echols County Planning Commission to implement the Comprehensive Plan	Underway				x	x	Expected Completion FY 2023
Prepare and adopt a land development regulations, which assists in implementing the Echols County Comprehensive Plan, revitalizes blighted areas, and regulates subdivisions and mobile home parks.	Underway	x	x	x	x	x	Expected Completion FY 2023
NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES							
Seek grants and provide technical assistance to Echols County Historical Society with the development of the museum of local history	Underway	x	x	x	x	x	Reword to read: Seek Members for the Echols County Historical Society to help with the development of the museum of local history Expected Completion FY 2023
Use completed historical resource inventory to preserve properties and use to encourage visitors and tourism to further the camera-ready program.	Underway	x	x	x	x	x	Reword to read: Continue to use the historical resource inventory to preserve properties and to encourage visitors Expected Completion FY 2025
Hire a code officer to enforce environmental ordinances	Completed			x	x		
HOUSING							
Develop a list of potential grants and funding sources for financing a housing rehabilitation program	Underway	x	x	x			Expected Completion FY 2025
Establish a housing rehabilitation program for neglected areas throughout the County	Underway				x	x	Expected Completion FY 2025

PROJECTS	REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	COMMENTS
Revitalize single-family housing that can be used for affordable housing through available grants and housing programs	Underway	x	x				Expected Completion FY 2025
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT							
Create an Industrial Development Authority to serve as the public catalyst for economic development	Underway	x	x	x			Expected Completion FY 2025
Identify available land to purchase for a public industrial park	Underway	x	x				Expected Completion FY 2025
Develop a public industrial park with infrastructure (roads, water, sanitary sewer, etc.)	Underway				x	x	Expected Completion FY 2024
Recruit new industries to place in the industrial park, and further develop and expand existing industries through financial incentives and designation of industrial park as an Opportunity Zone	Underway	x	x	x	x	x	Expected Completion FY 2025
Continue to pursue all applicable grants, loans, and technical assistance that will help enhance the community and foster economic development, including CDBG grants	Underway	x	x	x	x	x	Expected Completion FY 2025
Become a Camera Ready Community to attract visitors and businesses	Cancelled	x	x	x	x	x	Not eligible
Update the County website to raise awareness and promote the County (added Code Red)	Completed	x	x	x	x	x	
LAND USE							
Prepare and adopt a land Development Regulations, which assists in implementing the Echols County Comprehensive Plan, revitalizes blighted areas, and regulates subdivisions and mobile home parks	Underway	x	x	x	x	x	Expected Completion FY 2023
COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES							
Hire 2 new deputies as needed	Completed	x	x	x	x	x	

PROJECTS	REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	COMMENTS
Upgrade police communication devices on as need basis	Underway	x	x	x			Reword to read: Upgrade sheriff communication devices on as need basis, such as radios, cameras and computers Annually
Purchase for volunteer fire services (Air packs, fire service training, communication devices, one fire truck) on an as-needed basis	Underway	x	x	x	x	x	Reword to read: Purchase for volunteer fire services (Air packs, fire service training, and communication devices) on an as- need basis. Expected Completion FY 2025
Pursue funding for the upgrading of the intersection at GA 94 and State Route 135 by renovating buildings and landscaping to attract more businesses	Completed		x	x	x	x	
Install a new kitchen and two new bathrooms in the Court House	Cancelled				x		A new building is needed
Seek grant funds to construct a paved walking trail at Recreation Dept.	Completed			x	x	x	Located a Middle School
Pave and maintain Coggins Farm Road	Cancelled	x	x	x	x	x	Not needed
Prepare preliminary engineering plans and cost estimates for a sanitary sewer collection/treatment system for the Statenville area, County School, and possible new industrial park	Underway			x	x	x	Completion Expected 2023
Improve Road Department Shop and purchase new equipment: 2 graders, 1 side cutter, 1 dump truck	Underway		x	x	x	x	Reword to read: Improve Road Department Shop and purchase new equipment, 1 dump truck Completion Expected FY 2024
Apply to the Assistance to Firefighter Grant (AFG) for a fire truck pumper and equipment	Underway		x	x	x	x	Reword to read: Apply to the AFG for equipment (Pumper purchased) Completion Expected FY 2023
Research and review ways the community can improve its fire protection services and its ISO rating, and implement those measures (ISO rating has been lowered)	Underway	x	x	x			Reword to read: Research and review ways the community can improve its fire protection, and implement those measures Completion Expected FY 2023
Investigate potential funding sources to assist the community to improve its water utilities services	Cancelled	x					Water System is privately owned. No gov't funding available

PROJECTS	REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	COMMENTS
Expand the existing Board of Commissioners building to add office and storage space	Cancelled					x	Construct a new courthouse, which will also house the Sheriff's Dept. and the BOC building
Improve the intersections of Spur Road and Highway 94 and Highway 129	Completed		x	x	x		
Create a committee to research the feasibility of providing sewer services through the County for Statenville	Underway			x	x	x	Completion Expected FY 2025
Establish recreational programs for youth	Completed		x				
Create a public/private partnership between the water authority and the County Commission to address water needs, and enable the County to apply for CDBG grants to improve water supply and storage capability	Completed	x					

Echols County 5-Year Community Work Program Update (2021 – 2025)

PROJECTS	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	GOAL	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
NATURAL RESOURCES									
Educate the Public and private organizations on methods for preserving parks and recreation areas	Staff Time	BOCC	General Funds	1	x	x	x	x	
Use Comprehensive Land use plan to ensure mapping of lands to be permanently protected for preserving parks and recreation areas	Staff Time	BOCC	General Funds	1	x	x	x	x	
Use existing subdivision regulations to promote conservation of floodplains, wetlands, and groundwater recharge areas	Staff Time	BOCC	General Funds	1	x	x	x	x	
Continue to enforce regulations for taxes on timber to bring in more revenue	Staff Time	BOCC	General Funds	1	x	x	x	x	x
Create land Development regulations to enforce Part V Environmental Ordinance for River corridors protection	Staff	BOCC/SGRC/EPD	General Funds/ Grants	1	x	x	x	x	x
Seek funding to Leverage available greenspace grant funds	\$2,000,000	BOCC	General Funds, GA DOT TAP, DOHS-GEMA/FEMA, Private Foundations, Individual Assistance	1	x	x	x	x	
Identify and pursue funding to acquire properties in flood-prone areas	\$400,000	BOCC	OHS-GEMA, FEMA	1	x	x	x	x	
Prepare and adopt a land development regulations, which assists in implementing the Echols County Comprehensive Plan, revitalizes blighted areas, and regulates subdivisions and mobile home parks.	\$8,000	BOCC/SGRC	General Funds	3, 4, 5	x	x	x	x	x
CULTURAL RESOURCES									

PROJECTS	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	GOAL	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Seek members For the Echols County Historical Society to help with the development of the museum of local history	\$500	BOCC	General Fund	1	x	x	x		
Survey to list historic buildings and places	\$2500	BOCC/SGRC	General Fund/Grants	2	x	x	x		
Continue to use the historical resource inventory to preserve properties and to encourage visitors	\$1,500/y	BOCC	General Fund	1	x	x	x	x	x
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT									
Create an Industrial Development Authority to serve as the public catalyst for economic development	\$2,500	BOCC	General Fund	3	x	x			
Identify available land to purchase for a public industrial park	\$1,000	BOCC/SGRC	General Fund	3	x	x	x		
Develop a public industrial park with infrastructure (roads, water, sanitary sewer broadband, etc.)	\$500,000	BOCC/Industrial Dev. Authority	EIP, One Georgia and USDA Grants	3	x	x	x	x	
Recruit new industries to place in the industrial park, and further develop and expand existing industries through financial incentives and designation of industrial park as an Opportunity Zone	\$5,000	BOCC/Industrial Dev. Authority	General Fund	3	x	x	x	x	x
Continue to pursue all applicable grants, loans, and technical assistance that will help enhance the community and foster economic development, including CDBG grants and LMIG	\$5,000	BOCC/Industrial Dev. Authority	General Fund	3	x	x	x	x	x
Develop a strategy to attract more restaurant and businesses	Staff Time	BOCC/Chamber of Commerce	General Fund	3	x	x	x		
HOUSING									
Develop a list of potential grants and funding sources for financing a housing rehabilitation program	\$100	BOCC	General Fund	4	x	x	x		
Establish a housing rehabilitation program for neglected areas throughout the County	\$2,500	BOCC	General Fund	4	x	x	x	x	

PROJECTS	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	GOAL	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Revitalize single- family housing that can be used for affordable housing through available grants and housing programs	\$500,000	BOCC	CHIP, CDBG, Enterprise Zone	4	x	x	x	x	x
TRANSPORTATION									
Rebuild SR-135 bridge over the Alapahoochee River (known locally as the Little River")	\$1.5 million	BOCC/GDOT	TSPLOST, GDOT		x	x			
Repair J. Frank Culpepper Rd. bridge over the Alapahoochee River/1.0 miles (known locally as the "Little River")	\$78,943	BOCC/GDOT	General Funds/CDBG/ TSPLOST, GDOT			x	x		
Improve road signage at crossroads and install "Dead End" or "No Outlet" tags on road signs	\$25,000	BOCC/EMA Road Dept.	General Funds TSPLOST	3	x				
Pave and maintain May Day Road/1.566 miles (Grading, drainage, base and surfacing)	\$801,291	BOCC	LMIG, TSPLOST, General Fund	1	x	x	x		
Pave and maintain Carrol Road	\$232,017	BOCC	LMIG, TSPLOST, General Fund	1				x	x
Pave and maintain Kinsey Rd. (Grading, drainage, base and surfacing)	\$858,567	BOCC	CDBG, TSPLOST, Grants/ General Fund	1	x				
Pave and maintain John Hampton Rd. (Grading, drainage, base and surfacing)	\$310,273	BOCC	TSPLOST/General Fund	1	x				
Install sidewalks to improve safety for citizens	\$200,000	BOCC	TSPLOST/General Fund	1		x	x	x	
Participate in a public transit system	\$30,000-\$50,000 annually	BOCC	TSPLOST/Grants/General Fund	1	x	x	x	x	
Prepare preliminary engineering plans and cost estimates for a sanitary sewer collection/treatment system for the Statenville area, County School, and possible new industrial park	\$1,000,000	BOCC/Industrial Dev. Authority	General Fund, CDBG	6					
LAND USE									
Re-instate the Echols County Planning Commission to implement the Comprehensive Plan	\$2,500/YR	BOCC	General Fund	5	x	x	x		

PROJECTS	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	GOAL	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Prepare and adopt land development regulations, which assists in implementing the Echols County Comprehensive Plan revitalizes blighted areas, and regulates subdivisions and mobile home parks	\$5,000	BOCC/SGRC	General Fund	4	x	x	x		
COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES									
Upgrade sheriff communication devices on as need basis, such as radios, cameras and computers	\$15,000-\$20,000	BOCC	JAG Grants, General Fund	1	x	x	x	x	x
Purchase for volunteer fire services (Air packs, fire service training, communication devices) on an as- needed basis	\$497,000	BOCC/SGRC	AFG Grant	4	x	x	x	x	x
Construct a new courthouse, which will also house the Sheriff's Dept., the BOCC, and all other county offices	\$5,000,000	BOCC	General Fund/ TSPLOST	1			x	x	x
Prepare preliminary engineering plans and cost estimates for a sanitary sewer collection/treatment system for the Statenville area, County School, and possible new industrial park	\$1,000,000	County/Industrial Dev. Authority	General Fund, CDBG	4	x	x	x		
Improve Road Department Shop and purchase new equipment 1 dump truck	\$500,000	BOCC	General Fund/GEFA TSPLOST	1	x	x	x	x	
Apply to the AFG for equipment	\$215,000	BOCC/SGRC	AFG Grant	6	x	x	x		
Create a committee to research the feasibility of providing sewer services through the County for Statenville	\$3,000	BOCC	General Fund	5	x	x	x		
Purchase early warning system horn for hazardous weather, to be placed in Statenville, and other outlying communities	\$25,000	BOCC/EMA	General Funds, DOHS-GEMA/FEMA	6	x	x	x	x	

PROJECTS	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	GOAL	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Review data on storm events to determine where repetitive flooding occurs as a result of inadequate drainage infrastructure and identify & pursue grant funds to upgrade deficient drainage systems	\$500,000	BOCC/EMA/SGRC	DOHS-GEMA/FEMA, GA DCA CDBG	5	x	x	x	x	
Implement the "Community Emergency Response Team" (CERT) program	\$5,000	BOCC/EMA	General Funds	5	x	x	x		
Purchase and install mobile and fixed generators (including transfer switches) for all designated evacuation and emergency shelters, community water systems, and critical facilities, and wherever else they are needed	\$100,000 per generator	BOCC/EMA	General Funds, FEMA, GEMA, grants	5	x	x	x	x	
Trim tree lines around roads, homes, utilities, and businesses	\$100,000.00	BOCC/EMA	General Funds, GA Power, Oglethorpe EMC, Slash Pine EMC	6	x	x	x	x	
Seek funding to retrofit public buildings to reinforce windows, roofs, and doors for hazardous weather	\$500,000.00	BOCC/EMA	General Funds, DOHS-GEMA/FEMA	6	x	x	x	x	
Initiate an inspection program at critical facilities to identify construction weaknesses subject to high wind damage	\$10,000.00	BOCC	General Funds, DOHS-GEMA/FEMA	5	x	x	x	x	
Train all firefighters to FF1 & FF2 standards and ensure that emergency vehicle drivers are trained properly	\$4,000	BPCC/EMA/Fire Dept.	General Funds, DOHS-GEMA/FEMA, AFG	5	x	x	x	x	
Purchase latest NFPA compliant PPE turnout gear sets and SCBAs for firefighters	\$100,000	BOCC/EMA/Fire Dept.	General Funds, DOHS-GEMA/FEMA, AFG	5	x	x	x	x	
Purchase a new fire truck and rehabilitate old trucks, as needed	\$50,000	BOCC	General Funds, DOHS-GEMA/FEMA, AFG	5	x	x	x	x	

PROJECTS	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	GOAL	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Create a minimum of 30 feet of defensible fire space around all governmental structures	\$35 per acre	BOCC	General Funds, DOHS-FEMA/GEMA, USFS	6	x	x	x	x	
Purchase wildland hand tools & lightweight PPE gear for all fire stations and firefighters and investigate the need for additional tankers and overhead refill tanks (at rural stations)	\$50,000	BOCC/EMA/Fire Dept.	General Funds, DHS FEMA/GEMA, AFG	5	x	x	x	x	
Purchase automatic warning devices for hazardous weather for every outdoor recreation facility and every school outdoor recreation facility	\$25,000	BOCC/EMA	General Funds, DOHS-GEMA/FEMA	1	x	x	x	x	
Develop a comprehensive study that will allow community leaders to understand when public and domestic underground water systems' water levels are threatened	\$10,000	Statenville Water Authority/SGRC	General Funds	5	x	x	x	x	
Research and review ways the community can improve its fire protection, and implement those measures	Staff time	BOCC	General Funds	6	x	x	x		
BROADBAND									
Research ways to enhance the communication network for the county, including establishing a Wireless Network Center	Staff	BOCC	General Funds	1	x	x	x		
Establish broadband coverage for the county (including hot spots) and participate in Regional efforts in cooperation with GTA	\$500,000	Echols County	General Funds, SPLOST, Grants	1	x	x	x	x	

8. Economic Development Element

The 2018-2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), as developed by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission under a grant from the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration, is incorporated by reference into this Comprehensive Plan to serve as the Economic Development Element for Echols County.

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission's (SGRC) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was designed to bring together the public and private sectors in the creation of an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen the regional economy. The SGRC CEDS analyzed the regional economy and serve as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, a regional plan of action, and investment priorities and funding sources.

As a performance-based plan, this CEDS plays a critical role in adapting to global economic conditions by fully utilizing the region's unique advantages to maximize the economic opportunity for its residents by attracting private investment that creates jobs. The SGRC CEDS is a regionally owned strategy that is the result of a continuing economic development planning process developed with the regional public- and private-sector participation. This plan sets forth the goals and objectives necessary to solve the economic development problems of the Southern Georgia region and clearly defines the measures of success.

The Southern Georgia CEDS gives an overview of the region, briefly describing the geography, population, economy, labor and workforce development and use, education, transportation access, environment, and regional resources. It reviews the state of the regional economy. It provides a list of achievable Goals and Objectives for the region, a Plan of Action to ensure success, and Performance Measures used to evaluate the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's successful development and implementation of the 2018-2022 CEDS. Implementation of the goals identified in this plan is significant to the economic future of the SGRC District.

Policies, Needs, and Opportunities, and Short-term Work Program implementation strategies located in the current Comprehensive Plans for each jurisdiction in our 18-county region were used extensively to develop the CEDS Goals and Objectives, Vital Projects, and Problems and Opportunities.

Included below are goals, objectives, and strategies from the CEDS, which are aligned with the current economic development goals of Echols County.

Goal 1: Promote economic development strategies that encourage entrepreneurship, support existing industries, attract new employers, and stimulate tourism.

Objectives:

Strengthen and expand existing entrepreneurial support networks in rural areas.

Strategies:

- Strengthen and expand existing entrepreneurial support networks in rural areas.
- Promote business and entrepreneur learning opportunities.
- Focus on ways to encourage and facilitate regional tourism.

Goal 2: Protect, expand, and enhance critical infrastructure and connectivity for existing and future community growth.

Objectives:

Improve broadband access in rural communities.

Strategies:

- Identify areas where high-speed internet and broadband are needed.
- Develop small cells in communities without reliable broadband access.
- Strive to provide industrial parks/properties with all the necessary infrastructure to attract new and expanding businesses and industries to the area.
- Continue to monitor grant opportunities.

Goal 3: Facilitate the growth and development of an educated, skilled, prepared workforce by utilizing available programs and resources.

Objectives:

Develop a well-trained professional, technical, and skilled workforce capable of accommodating new industry and maintaining existing industry.

Strategies:

- Improve educational attainment by reducing high school dropout rates.
- Market workforce development programs that enable youth and adults to pursue higher education opportunities.
- Support educational institutions to provide learning/skill development opportunities.

Goal 4: Create an inviting sense of place through rural renewal and other strategies to retain population and to attract new members to our community.

Objectives:

Revitalize populated areas throughout the county.

Strategies:

- Collaborate to develop historic preservation plan.
- Increase code enforcement to enhance the downtown area. Include more enforcement for the surrounding areas.

- Encourage the county government to participate in CHIP, CDBG, and USDA housing programs.
- Seek additional funding streams to address senior population program

Appendix

- 1) Sign-In Sheets**
- 2) Map of Echols County**
- 3) Analysis of Data Charts**
- 4) Public Hearing Notices**
- 5) Transmittal Letters**
- 6) Adoption Resolutions**

Southern Georgia Regional Commission
Echols County 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update
1st Workshop – Goals, Needs, and Opportunities
September 12, 2019

Name	Organization	Title	Email
Bobbi Pohlman-Rodgers			juvieniann@bellsouth.net
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Latrice Bennett			ecbac@yahoo.com
Stacy Lebitz			
John S. Quorben	WARS Suwannee Suwannee	Z	cadout@ SuwanneeNewkegs.cis

Southern Georgia Regional Commission
 Echols County 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update
 2nd Workshop – Policies and Work Program Report of Accomplishments
 November 8, 2019

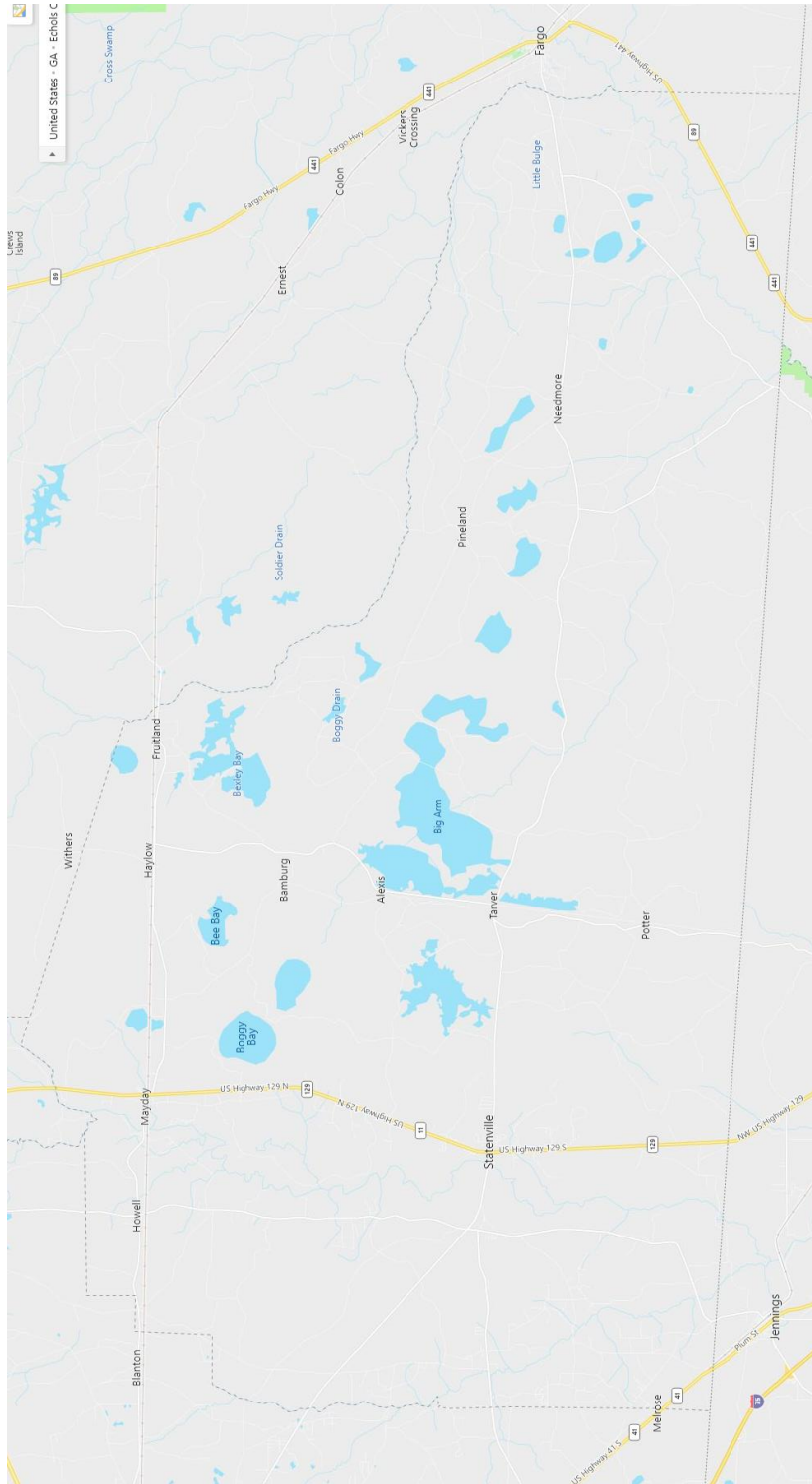
Name	Organization	Title	Email
Bobbi Pohlman-Rodgers			juviemom@bellsouth.net
Latrice Bennett	ECBOC	County Administrator	ecboc@yahoo.com
Kenneth Petty	ECBOC	County Commissioner	KennethPetty@Icloud
Beverly Kinse	ECBOC	Asst. Clerk	ecboc@yahoo.com
JD Dillard	SGRC		
Loretta Hylt	SGRC		

**ECHOLS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLANE UPDATE
TRANSMITTAL HEARING
JUNE 4, 2020**

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	EMAIL
Patricia Bonnett	Echols Co Bd of Comm	229-559-6538	ecboc@yahoo.com
Mark Corbett	"	229-561-0930	
Rogge Zapp	"	229-506-8275	
Billy D. ...	"	229-300-0821	
Karen Hylk	S GRC		
Tom ...	ECBOC ROAD		
Tom ...	Resident		
L. Corbett	City/Vet	229 412-2084	LCORBETT39@OUTLOOK.COM
Kenneth R. ...			
Bobbi Pohlman Kalders	Kalders Resident	229-300-8998	
Sylvia Jeff	Echols Co. Fam. Comm.	229-559-6956	echolsfc@gmail.com
Tracey ...	Kingline Equipment	229-531-9200	Tracey@kinglineequipment.com
... ..	Ec Products	229 356 1052	judger.dgers@planet.net

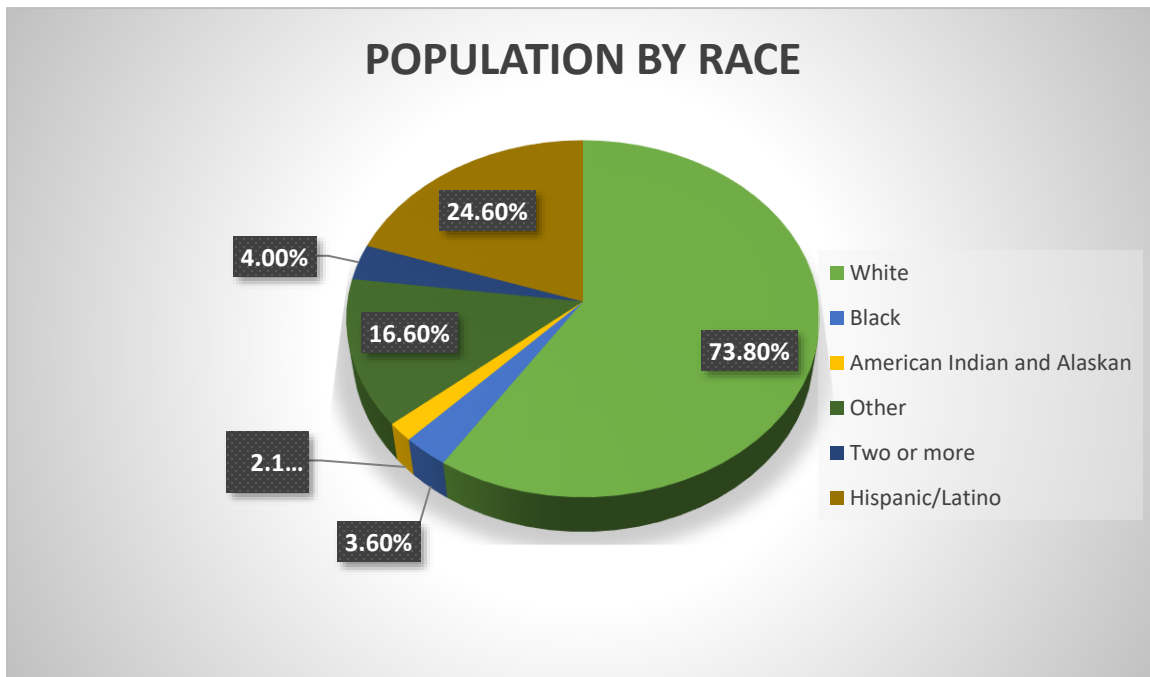
Appendix #2

Map of Echols County

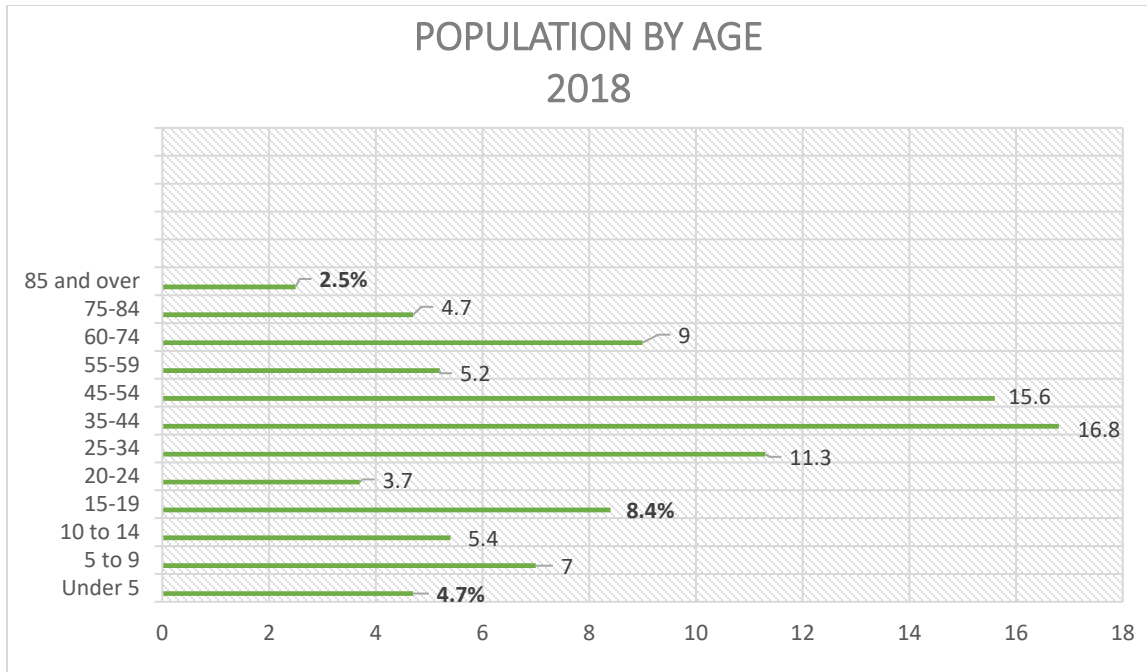


Appendix #3

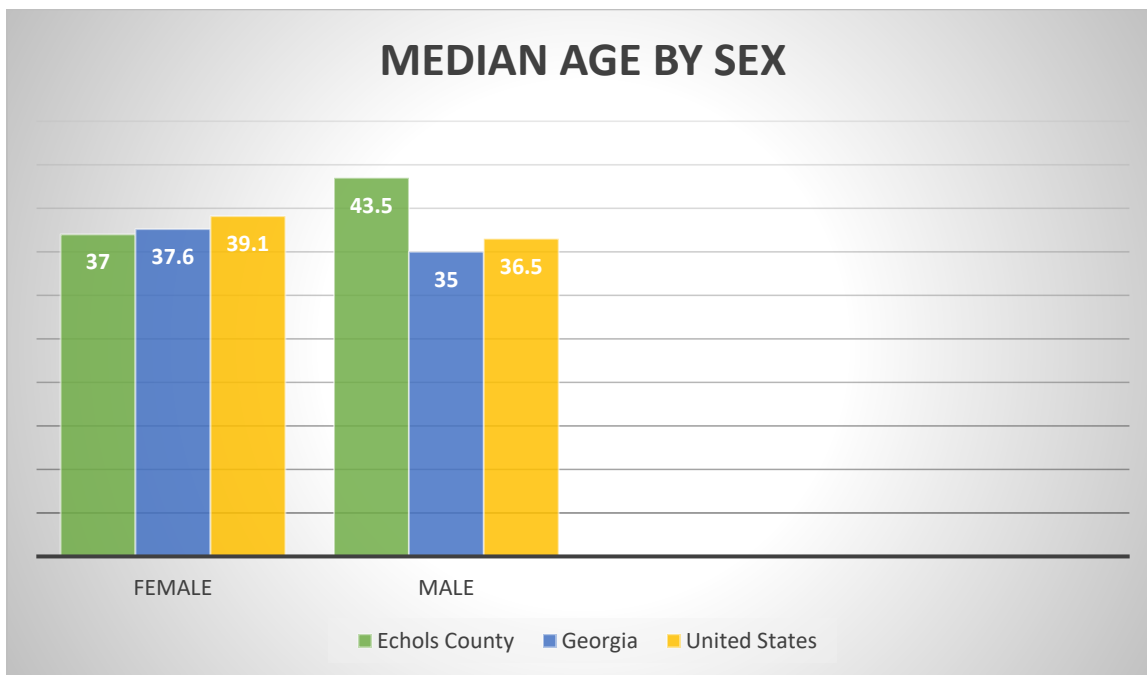
Analysis of Data and Information Maps



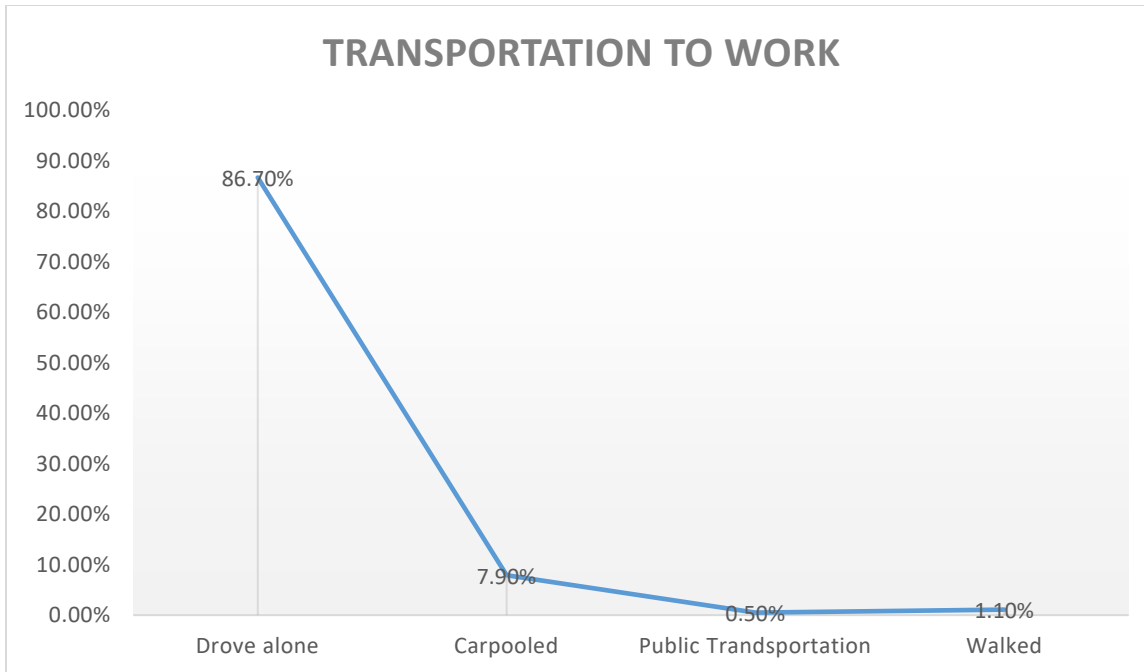
(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, www.Census.gov)



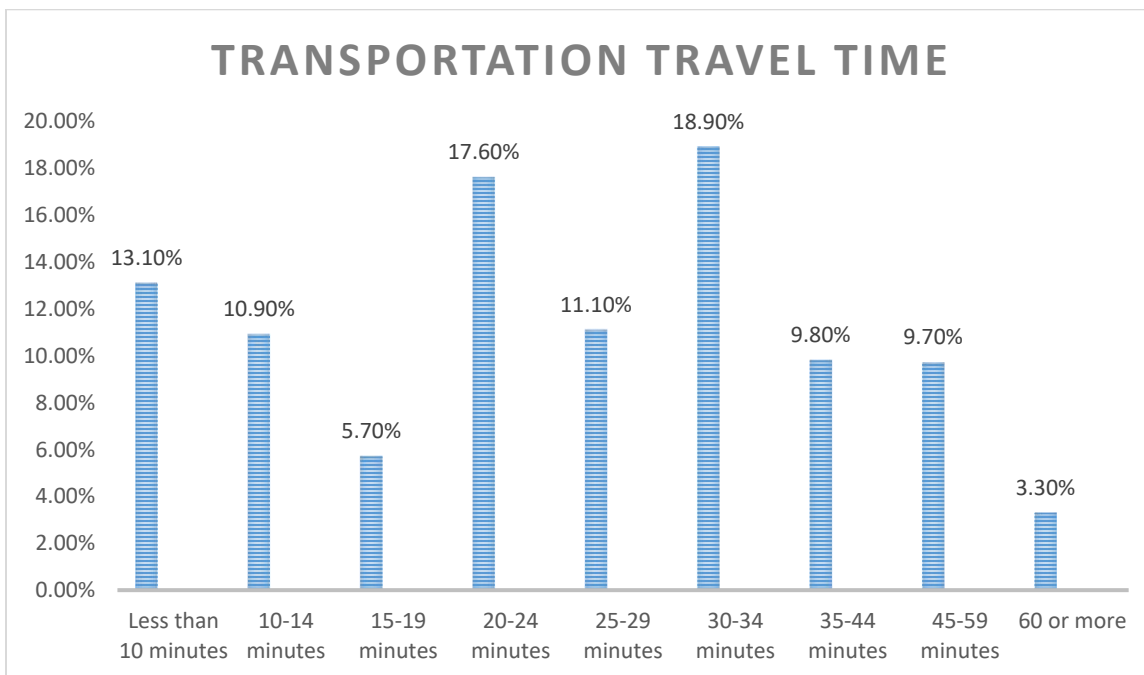
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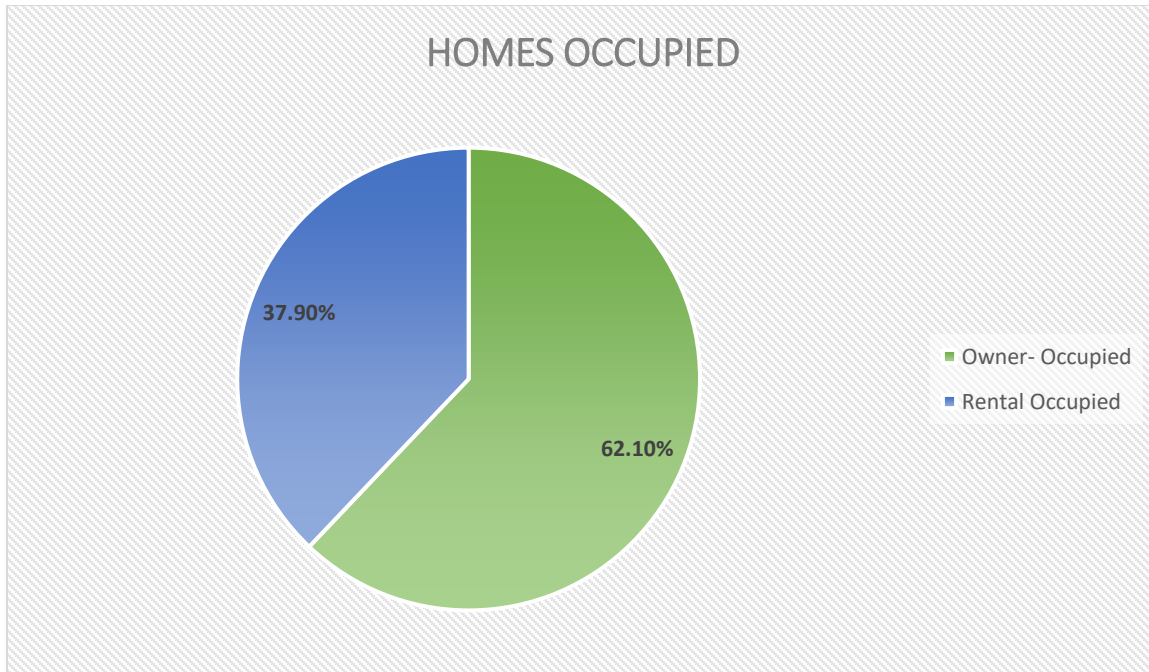
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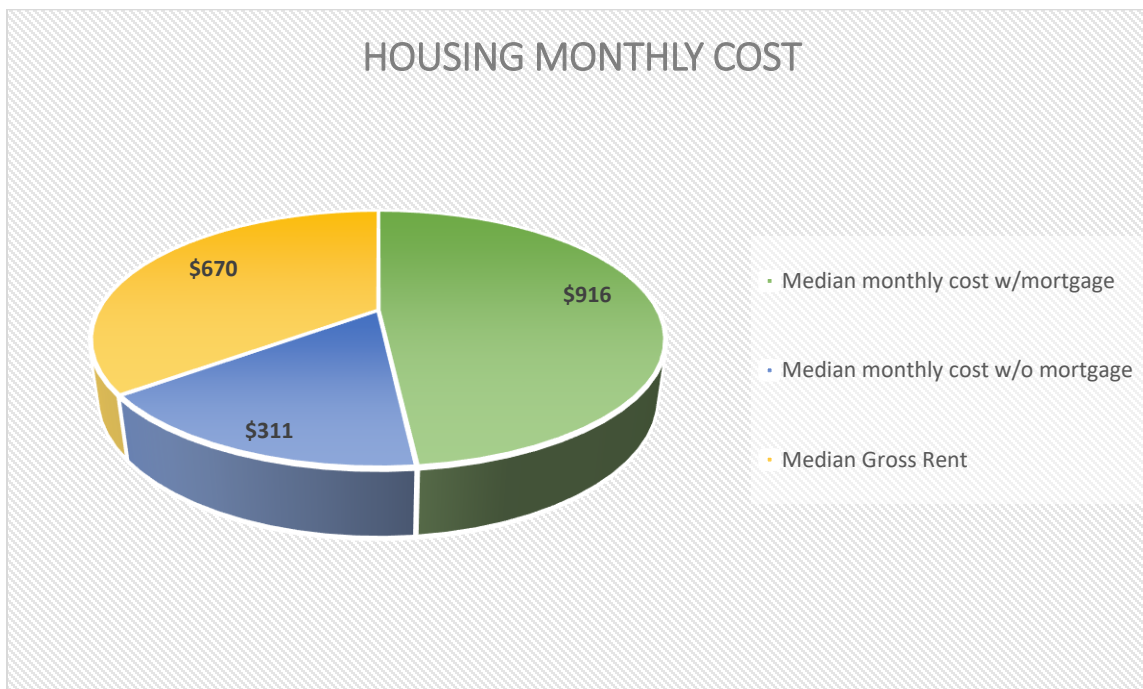
(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, www.Census.gov)



(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, www.Census.gov)

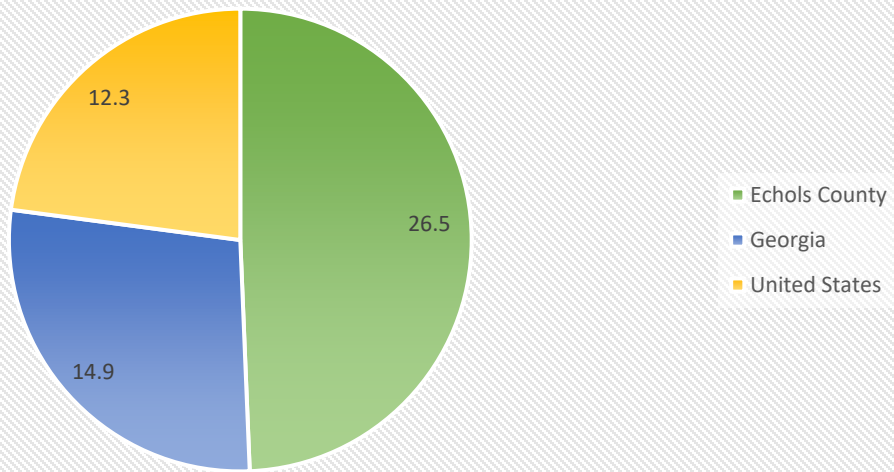


(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, www.Census.gov)



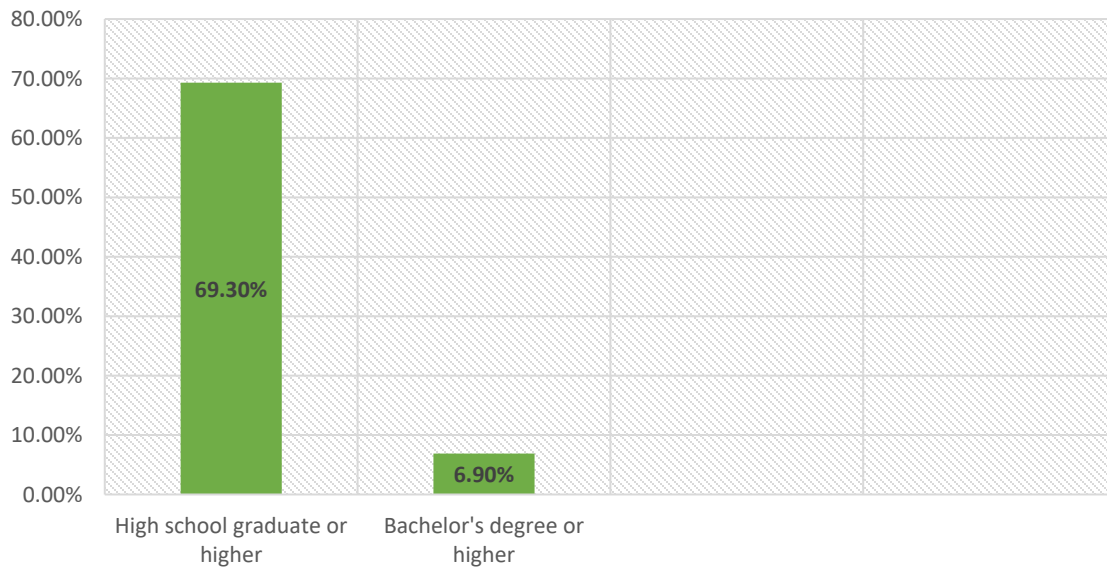
(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, www.Census.gov)

PERSONS LIVING IN POVERTY



(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, www.Census.gov)

EDUCATION ATTAINMENT



(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, www.Census.gov)

PUBLIC NOTICE

A public meeting to review and transmit the Echols County Comprehensive Plan Update to the Southern Georgia Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for review will be held on June, 4th, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Echols County Commissioners Meeting Room, at 110 General DeLoach Rd, Statenville, Georgia 31648. Residents are invited to attend and participate in the planning effort. Copies of the Plan Update are available for public review at the Echols County Commission office and their respective website and for download at the SGRC website www.sgrc.us

For more information, contact the Echols County Commission at (229) 559-6538, or Loretta Hylton at the Southern Georgia Regional Commission at (229) 333-5277.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

A public meeting to review and transmit the Echols County Comprehensive Plan Update to the Southern Georgia Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for review will be held on April 2nd, 2020 at 6:30 PM. The meeting will be held in the Echols County Commissioners Meeting Room, at 110 General DeLoach Rd, Statenville, Georgia 31648. Residents are invited to attend and participate in the planning effort. Copies of the Plan Update are available for public review at the Echols County Commission office and their respective website and for download at the SGRC website www.sgrc.us

For more information, contact the Echols County Commission at 229-559-6538, or Loretta Hylton at the Southern Georgia Regional Commission at 229-229-5227.

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*Bobby Walker,
Commissioner
114 Winston Lane
DuPont, GA 31630
(229) 300-0821*



*Stanley Corbett, Vice-Chairman
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(229) 560-3026*

*William Holland, County Attorney
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CONSOLIDATED GOVERNMENT

*Latrice Bennett, Administrator/County Treasurer
110 General De Loach St., PO Box 190
Statenville, GA. 31648
(229) 559-6538/Fax (229) 559-6158
Email: ecboc@yahoo.com
www.echolscountyga.com*

June 4, 2020

To: Southern Georgia Regional Commission
327 West Savannah Avenue
Valdosta, Georgia 31601

RE: Comprehensive Plan Update Submittal

Echols County has completed an update of its Comprehensive Plan and is submitting it with this letter for review by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission and the Department of Community Affairs.

I certify that we have held the required public hearings and have involved the public in development of the plan in a manner appropriate to our community's dynamics and resources. Evidence of this has been included with our submittal.

I certify that appropriate staff and decision-makers have reviewed both the Regional Water Plan(s) covering our area and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria (O.C.G.A. 12-2-8) and taken them into consideration in formulating our plan.

If you have any questions concerning our submittal, please contact **Latrice Bennett, County Administrator, 229-559-6538, or at ecboc@yahoo.com.**

Sincerely,



Chair, Echols County Board of Commissioners

"Carrot Capital of the South "

RESOLUTION NO: 2020-005

**RESOLUTION TO ADOPT
2020 ECHOLS COUNTY
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

WHEREAS, Echols County has completed the 2020 Echols County Comprehensive Plan Update;

WHEREAS, this document was prepared according to the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning effective October 1, 2018;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that Echols County does hereby adopt the 2020 Echols County Comprehensive Plan Update.

Adopted this 9th day of July, 2020.



Kenneth Petty, Chairman



ATTEST: Latrice Bennett, County Clerk

